

KUSHAN SCULPTURE
IMAGES FROM EARLY INDIA



The Cleveland Museum of Art
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The Cleveland Museum of Art
13 November 1985 - 5 January 1986

Asia House
New York, N.Y.
13 February - 6 April 1986
Seattle Art Museum
8 May - 13 July 1986

September 25, 1985

"The Twain Shall Meet"
October 30, 1985 - January 12, 1986

To provide a broader historical setting for the major loan exhibition, Kushan Sculpture: Images from Early India, this exhibition presents works of art that linked East and West over many centuries of trade and mutual influence. The more than 70 objects of "The Twain Shall Meet," drawn primarily from the collections of The Cleveland Museum of Art, tell the story of artistic styles, techniques, ornament, and iconography traveling both ways across the formidable 7000-mile expanse that separated the Far East and Europe. The Kushan rulers in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd centuries dominated lands the caravans crossed in northern and northwestern India.

The earliest carriers of change were marauding nomads roaming the steppes that stretched from Manchuria to Hungary and looting wherever something struck their fancy. This erratic movement of goods was gradually replaced by the more reliable, but still perilous, system of caravans: intrepid camel-drivers and merchants braved scorching deserts and ice-covered mountain passes to trade commodities between the two great empires--Rome and China--which stood at opposite ends of the known world but knew almost nothing about each other. Along with goods, philosophies and religions traveled across these so-called "Silk Routes" carrying Buddhism from India via Central Asia to the Far East.

While only fragments of silk have survived the centuries, many other objects remain which exemplify the flourishing East-West exchange and its impact on the arts of the areas between. The exhibition shows how Classical poses and drapery styles shaped early images of the Buddha in India, how the ceramic techniques of T'ang China influenced

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Islamic wares, and how Western forms affected Indian miniatures and Japanese prints. Animal motifs originating in Sasanian Iran appear in Chinese textiles, while Chinese floral decoration reappears in Persian carpets and Italian velvets. The objects in this exhibition range widely in date, from the fifth century BC to the nineteenth century AD, and are executed in a variety of media: silver, lacquer, textiles, ceramics, prints, drawings, terracotta, and marble. Some masterpieces which especially illuminate this rich exchange include: a silver rhyton which combines the Indian features of a beautiful female head with the head of a buffalo and was probably produced in eastern Iran in the 5th century; a drawing by Rembrandt after an Indian miniature of Shah Jahan, the builder of the Taj Mahal; and a Chinese fan painting by the Italian Baroque artist Giuseppe Castiglione who was court painter to the emperor of Ch'ing China.

Jenifer Neils, assistant curator of ancient art, and Marjorie Williams, associate curator of education, organized the exhibition and prepared wall texts for each of its sections. Dr. Neils has written an essay on the exchange of artistic influence between East and West and along the "Silk Routes," which is published as the October issue of the Museum's Bulletin, available at the Bookstore.

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